

**2011 Plants of the Year**  
**Compiled by Tina Tuttle, FFGC and Deep South Region Horticulture Chairman**

Rose: 2011 Roses of the Year

All-American Rose Selection (AARS): Each AARS test garden has a judging panel that participates in a bi-annual scoring process. In this “blind process,” judges do not know the breeder or introducer for the plants they’re grading, and they’re asked to submit scores by serial number.

Tests conducted in 23 gardens nationwide to represent all climate zones. Each garden is also given the care of an average home garden so these roses aren’t spoiled. If they can thrive during our testing, they will most certainly thrive in your garden. In test gardens, the roses are carefully evaluated on a number of criteria. In fact, the judges put many hours of observation into monitoring the performance of the top roses throughout the growing season. AARS winning roses embody all of the characteristics today’s homeowners desire in a garden plant. Each AARS winning rose excelled in an extensive two-year trial program where it’s judged on everything from rose disease resistance to flower production, color and fragrance.

They grade each of the roses on the following characteristics:

- Novelty
- Form - of both buds and open blooms
- Color throughout the blooming cycle
- Aging quality
- Flowering effect
- Rose Fragrance
- Stem/cluster form
- Plant habit
- Vigor
- Foliage
- Rose Disease resistance
- Repeat bloom quality



Each winning rose bears the AARS red rose logo as a “seal of approval” that ensures gardeners that the plants will grow beyond expectations with little maintenance.

**‘Dick Clark’**

Black-red buds spiral open to show off swirls of cream edging washed with vibrant cherry pink. When the sun strikes the petals, they begin to blush burgundy, finishing as a deep, dark red. Foliage is super-shiny green with long cutting stems. ‘Dick Clark’, a grandiflora, is easy to grow and has great vigor.

**‘Walking on Sunshine’**

Tight clusters of bright yellow buds burst open with an anise aroma. This plant’s super glossy, disease-resistant foliage contrasts beautifully with the cheery, eye-catching flowers. ‘Walking on Sunshine’ is easy to care for and great for beginners. It’s a floribunda with fantastic bloom production and great vigor.

**Jackson & Perkins: Always and Forever™:** Hybrid Tea Rose: As classic and romantic as love itself, this year’s Rose of the Year exudes a classic beauty, reminiscent of nostalgic roses of yesteryear. Nothing rivals the beauty of a long-stemmed, velvety red rose. Each elegant, high-centered bud

slowly unfurls to reveal a gorgeous 5-inch bloom that lasts and lasts in the vase. With a tall growth habit and dark green glossy foliage, it also makes an excellent landscape plant.

**Jackson & Perkins:** Only one word is needed to describe this year's Floribunda of the Year. **Shazam!**<sup>™</sup> packs a punch with large clusters of sassy hot pink and yellow blooms and a spicy fragrance that will knock your socks off. You'll marvel at the super bloom power, electric colors, and garden performance of Shazam!<sup>™</sup>

**Herb of the Year:** *To achieve Herb of the Year status, an herb must fit within at least two of the three following categories: (1) Medicinal, (2) Culinary, (3) Craft or Decorative.*

Every year since 1995, the International Herb Association has chosen an Herb of the Year to highlight. **Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*)** is the official Herb of the Year for 2011. Horseradish is native to Southeast Europe. It is a 3 foot tall perennial with coarse texture, weedy looking with large white roots. Prefers cooler temperature of Zones 8-1 and full sun. Harvest pieces of the root from outside the clump. Scrub them well, peel them and cut out any dark spots. Grate directly onto your food or mix with vinegar and sour cream.

**Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association:** Sponsored by FNGLA, the Florida Garden Select program is designed to promote the use of superior and proven Florida plants. Benefiting growers, garden centers and consumers alike, Florida Garden Select plants are ideal for most Florida gardens. Many of the selected plants can reach outside Florida and into most Southern States. Use the zone feature to locate plants specific to your growing zone. Florida Garden Select plants have been deemed superior plants for Florida's environment by a jury of growers, horticulturists, retailers, landscape professionals and University of Florida faculty members. The program is over a decade old having spent much of the first decade as the Florida Plants of the Year program.

**Gold Medallion Tree (*Cassia leptophylla*)** Zones: USDA zones 9 - 11

Typical Height and Spread: 25'-30' tall x 15'-25' wide

Classification: Flowering tree Landscape

Use: specimen or accent

Characteristics: With a profusion of beautiful yellow flowers which bloom in early summer and sometimes again in the fall, this partially-deciduous, subtropical tree's flower clusters can measure up to 12" and last up to a month. Originating from Brazil, this tree is well-adapted to much of Florida's climate: warm areas of zone 9a, 9b through 11. It's adorned with lacy, glossy foliage and forms large seed pods, which are poisonous, following its bloom cycle. It is drought tolerant once established in the landscape, performs best with summer heat and can survive temperatures into the mid to low 20's. Its bright summer (July and August) color makes it a winner for many Florida landscapes. Prune hard after blooming.

**Prostrate Japanese Plum Yew (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia* 'Prostrata')** USDA zones 6 - 10

Mature Height and Spread: 2' - 3' tall X 3' - 4' wide

Classification: Low-growing shrub Landscape

Use: Ground cover, low hedges, foundation planting  
Characteristics: A handsome, low maintenance ground cover, the Prostrate Yew has elegant, attractive, dark green foliage with an interesting needle-like texture indicative of conifers. Low spreading when young, it becomes mound-shaped

with arching branches as it matures. It is propagated from lateral branches to remain low. It's a good substitute in southern gardens for Taxus, tolerates drought once established, and performs best watered adequately during dry spells. This plant is a great addition to landscapes with limited space and partial to deep shade. It is deer resistant. The female plant produces a brown fruit similar to a plum.

**Caranday Palm (*Copernicia alba*)** Zones: USDA zones 9b - 11  
Mature Height and Spread: 20' - 30' but can reach 50' in the wild  
Classification: Palm tree Landscape

Use: Specimen, groupings

Characteristics: This unique palm has silver-green fronds which nicely contrast with its chocolate brown spikey stems. The fruit is black in color, distinguishing it from other palms. It has a solitary stem with a rounded crown of stiff fronds. This palm can grow in both dry and seasonally wet soils. In fact Caranday translates to "water palm". In its native South America, the trunk is used to build bungalows and it is currently being studied for possible use as a biodiesel crop.

**Wire Vine (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*)**

Zones: USDA zones 6 - 9

Mature Height and Spread: 4" - 6" tall X 30" spread

Classification: Ground cover Landscape

Use: Ground cover, turf substitute, container

Characteristics: Small rounded leaves with a glossy green finish form a spreading mat of dense creeping wiry stems. In late spring to early summer, small white flowers bloom and subsequently form small berries. Wire vine tolerates fairly high foot traffic and a variety of soils from sand to clay. Fall and winter foliage color is bronze-green. Excellent for erosion control on slopes and for use in a large area, this ground cover is a great addition to Florida landscapes!

**'Snow Princess' (*Lobularia hybrid*)**—Sweet Alyssum. Zones: Annual except in USDA zones 9 - 11

Mature Height and Spread: 4" - 6" tall and mounding, cascading

Classification: Annual

Landscape Use: Containers, hanging baskets, accent color in landscape, ground cover

Characteristics: A unique breakthrough in the genus for heat tolerance and extended season, this plant is extremely vigorous, and because it puts no energy into setting seed it has an incredibly long bloom time. In fact, Snow Princess™ has displayed mounds of fragrant (smells like honey), pure white blooms from January through July in Florida. No deadheading is necessary for repeat blooming. It creates a great hanging basket or window box and is an ideal filler for combination containers. Full sun or partial shade is best for this exciting bloomer. Cut back to prevent rangy growth. May revert back to taller plant.

**Yellow Butterfly Pea Vine (*Callaeum macropterum*--formerly *Mascagnia macroptera*—AKA *Stigmaphyllon ciliatum*?)** Zones: USDA zones 8B - 11

Mature Height and Spread: to 15' tall

Classification: Vine Landscape

Use: Cascading from trellis, pergola or fence, screening, color accent

Characteristics: Native to Mexico, this heat-loving, evergreen, scrambling bushy vine has long-lasting, five-petal flowers which measure about 1". A true beauty in the landscape, it is almost a constant bloomer! Its common name comes from its interesting seed pod which resembles a butterfly. These papery pods are lime-green when they appear and will turn tan to brown as they mature. The seeds can be harvested from the pod and planted—usually propagated by cuttings. A

fairly drought tolerant vine, regular watering through the warm season will enhance this vine's appearance and appeal.

### **Mule Palm (*X Butiagrus nabonnandii*)**

Zones: USDA zones 8a - 11

Mature Height and

Spread: 20' - 40'

Classification: Palm tree

Landscape Use: Specimen, groupings, xeric garden, avenues

Characteristics: A hybrid palm created by intergeneric crossing the *Butia capitata* (Pindo or Jelly Palm) and the *Syagrus romanzoffiana* (Queen Palm), the mule palm adds a cold-hardy tropical flair and is well-suited for North Florida's climate as its cold-hardy. The fronds are characteristically curvaceous and have a lush green appearance. This palm is sterile, thus the name 'Mule Palm,' and exhibit hybrid vigor. It tolerates a range of soil types from clay to sand. As with most palms, good drainage is an important factor in its ability to thrive. The trees grow well in coastal areas and is salt water tolerant and cold hardy.

**Hosta Society:** Since 1996 the members of the American Hosta Growers Association, have selected a Hosta based on outstanding merits. These Hostas have exceptionally decorative foliage, showy or fragrant flowers, and perform well throughout their hardiness zones 3-9. Generally shade lovers but some can tolerate some sun. They like enriched soils and mulching is needed to prevent soil spattering from the rain. Pests include snails and slugs.

**Hosta 'Praying Hands'** is one of the most unique hosta varieties. The stiff, upright, folded green leaves have thin gold margins. The leaves are folded almost into a tube shape to give the appearance of "praying hands"! The slightly shiny, slightly rippled, twisted leaves are spectacular! Small [15" tall x 12" wide]. Lavender flowers late season. Will go dormant in winter.

**Perennial Plant Association:** How is the Perennial Plant of the Year selected? The selection process is quite simple – PPA members vote for the POY. In addition to their vote, each member nominates plants for future consideration. The Perennial Plant of the Year Committee reviews the nominated perennials and selects 3 to 4 plants to be placed on the ballot. Nominations are based on the following criteria:

Suitable for a wide range of climatic conditions

Low maintenance

Pest and disease resistant

Readily available in the year of release

Multiple season of ornamental interest

Easily propagated by asexual or seed propagation

Customarily, a high percentage of returned ballots are received, certainly much higher than in the November general election. The voting reflects the interest in the Plant of the Year© and the enjoyment and impact felt by the perennial market and consumers alike.

**Amsonia hubrichtii** was discovered in 1942 in Arizona by Leslie Hubricht. It is kin to milkweed (Apocynaceae family). It grows 36 inches tall and 36 inches wide in a mounded form. This hardy perennial grows in hardiness zones 4 through 9 and is a versatile North American native.

*Amsonia* or "Blue Star" offers a variety of features throughout the seasons. From late spring to early summer, two- to three-inch wide clusters of small, light blue, star-shaped flowers are borne above the ferny foliage. The alternate-arranged leaves are bright green in spring and summer, but turn a bright yellow-golden color in fall. You may already have the *A. tabernaemontana*, native Amsonia, in your garden.

- Light – Plants thrive in full sun to partial shade
- Soil – This plant performs best in average, moist well-drained soil but tolerates less moisture. Once established, it can tolerate drier conditions.
- Uses – This perennial for the seasons is an asset in borders, native gardens, cottage gardens, or open woodland areas. It is best when massed. Arkansas blue star is attractive when mixed with ornamental grasses and plants that have attractive seed heads.
- Unique Qualities – Light blue flowers in spring are followed by marvelous foliage in summer. Golden-yellow fall color is second to none among herbaceous perennials.
- Hardiness – USDA Zones 4 to 9

The National Garden Bureau All-American Selections (AAS):

AAS winners are selected from many new cultivars, based on performance in the garden, as well as in the greenhouse. Although no plant offers a guarantee of success in an individual garden, the AAS winners have proven themselves worthy over a broad range of growing conditions. Try these new selections alongside your old standbys so you'll have a means of comparison. AAS winners should be available through local garden centers and mail-order catalogs this spring. Every year, the National Garden Bureau announces All-America Selections, or AAS, winners, cultivars that a network of independent judges across the country find superior. All of the cultivars are new and have never been sold. AAS was started in 1932 to give gardeners a heads-up of what to look for in spring.

**Zinnia:** For decades, zinnias have been the flowering annual of choice for spreading glorious colors throughout the garden as well as for cutting to bring indoors. But it wasn't always so. When the Spanish first saw zinnia species in Mexico, they thought the flower was so unattractive they named it *mal de ojos*, or "sickness of the eye!" Years of breeding have brought striking new colors, shapes, sizes, and growing habits to the humble zinnia. No present day gardener would ever describe this versatile bloomer as anything less than eye catching.

*Zinnia elegans* is the Common Zinnia, an annual 1-4 feet tall. Comes in white, pink, salmon, red, yellow, orange, lavender, purple. Comes in various sizes: Small to 1 foot tall such as Dasher, Dreamland, Peter Pan and Small World series. Intermediate between 1-2 feet tall such as the Lilliput mix. The tall varieties are up to 4 feet tall and are called Giant.

*Zinnia angustifolia* is the Narrow Leafed Zinnia, also an annual. It is mildew resistant and grows 16" tall and wide. It is usually orange, but comes in white too.

The hybrid Profusion Zinnias are a cross between *Z. elegans* and *Z. angustifolia*. Look for 'Profusion Cherry Pink', 'Profusion Orange' and 'Profusion White'.